

ASI Standards Setting and Revision Procedure

V4 – December 2022

1 PURPOSE

This is a procedure for the development, approval, publication and revision of ASI Standards and ASI Guidance. It reflects a commitment by ASI to:

- openness and transparency in its processes
- diversity of inputs, from a wide range of Stakeholders
- integrity and respect in its treatment of inputs
- public disclosure of inputs and responses
- align with the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice (Standards Setting Code, Impacts Code and the Assurance Code).

2 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This procedure applies to the development of new and revision of existing ASI Standards, as well as to the review and maintenance of ASI Guidance on Implementation outside Formal Revision processes.

The procedure does not apply to:

- Non-Substantive Changes to existing ASI Standards and ASI Guidance
- ASI internal operational procedures and policies.

3 DEFINITIONS

ASI Standards	Normative texts, currently ASI Performance Standard and ASI Chain of Custody Standard, with a common ASI Glossary.
Consensus	General agreement achieved through a process seeking to take into account the views of interested or affected Stakeholders, particularly those directly affected, reconciliation of conflicting arguments and characterised by the absence of sustained opposition from Stakeholders to substantial issues. NOTE – Consensus need not imply unanimity (adapted from ISEAL Code of Good Practice and ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004).
Formal Revision	The process encompassing the revision of the ASI Standards, on a five-yearly mandatory basis.
Outcome	The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term results from the implementation of the Standard.
Board	ASI Board as defined in the ASI Governance Handbook.
Non-Substantive Changes	Correction of typographical errors or minor inconsistencies, or formatting changes that do not involve changes to the content or performance requirements specified in the Standard.

ASI Guidance on Implementation (“ASI Guidance”)	Currently ASI Performance Standard Guidance, ASI Chain of Custody Standard Guidance.
Standards Committee	ASI Standards Committee as defined in the ASI Governance Handbook.
Stakeholders	Individual or group interested in, concerned with or directly affected by a Standard.
Standard	Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, or characteristic for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is voluntary. (ISEAL Code of Good Practice).

4 REFERENCES

- ASI Assurance Manual
- ASI Performance Standard
- ASI Performance Standard Guidance
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard Guidance
- ASI Claims Guide
- ASI Communications Procedure for Changes to ASI Documents
- ASI Complaints Mechanism
- ASI Glossary
- ASI Governance Handbook
- ASI Website
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice: First consultation draft (22 Sept 2022)
- ISO/IEC Guide 2 Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary

5 PROCEDURE

Formal Process: ASI Standards

There are five main stages to the development and revision of ASI Standards and Guidance, applied sequentially. Each stage is required for Formal Revisions, while some are optional for changes (such as updates to Guidance or editorial clarifications) that occur outside the Formal Revision process:

A. Proposal	Mandatory for Formal Revision and non-Formal Revision
B. Preparation	Mandatory for Formal Revision and non-Formal Revision
C. Consultation	Mandatory for Formal Revision; optional for non-Formal Revision
D. Approval	Mandatory for Formal Revision and non-Formal Revision
E. Publication	Mandatory for Formal Revision and non-Formal Revision

5.1 Proposal Stage

ASI Standards

1. The Stakeholder must submit the proposal to the ASI Secretariat including:
 - Justification for the creation of a new ASI Standard or revision of an existing ASI Standard; and
 - Information including content, scope and application of a new ASI Standards, or
 - Overview of suggested changes for an existing ASI Standard
2. The ASI Secretariat will review the proposal and inform the ASI Board.
3. Decision and timing to proceed with the development of a new ASI Standard or revision of an existing ASI Standard rests with the ASI Board.
4. The maximum period that an ASI Standard may go without mandatory revision is five years.

ASI Standards & ASI Guidance

5. Any ASI Stakeholder can initiate a proposal to develop a new or review an existing ASI Standard and ASI Guidance.

5.2 Preparation Stage

5.2.1 General principles

ASI Standards

6. Once a Standard's revision or development process is approved, the ASI Secretariat will engage with the ASI Standards Committee to:
 - a. Coordinate the identification of Stakeholders to be directly involved.

- o This includes lists of sectors that have an interest in an ASI Standard and key Stakeholder groups within those sectors, based on the standard's scope and its social, environmental and economic Outcomes.
 - o Key Stakeholder sectors/groups shall include overlapping and/or interested standards programs. To encourage interoperability between related standards programs, the ASI Secretariat will inform organisations, seek input and encourage their participation in the standards development or revision process.
- b. Collate information relevant to the ASI Standard.
 - c. Identify issues and opportunities associated with the ASI Standard.
 - d. Develop a first draft of the Terms of Reference (see section 5.2.2 below) that outlines the development and/or review process including a public consultation and feedback process.
 - e. Develop a proposed timing for the ASI Standard development / revision from the first public comment stage to proposed approval by the Standards Committee. As a guide, minor revisions may take place over 6-8 months, and more significant developments/revisions may take place over up to 2 years.
 - f. Develop a first draft of the ASI Standard for public comment during the consultation stage (see section 5.3).
 - g. Develop a template for comments submission and a register for recording how comments were addressed.
 - h. Determine the role of the Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group and the need for any other Working Group/s to assist with drafting or revision of the ASI Standards. If a new Working Group is required, it must be established with terms of reference in accordance with the agreed template for establishing Working Groups, should include participants from industry and non-industry relevant to the scope, and be approved by the Standards Committee. External subject matter expertise may be called upon to assist the Working Group as required after a consideration of financial resources required and approval from the ASI CEO.
7. All ASI Standards shall adopt the credibility principles outlined in the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.
 8. Individual performance requirements shall be written to adopt the following ASI principles:
 - Express a single expectation
 - Be simple, clear, concise
 - Be implementable
 - Be readily auditable.
 9. The first draft of the ASI Standard shall be subject to the legal review process outlined in section 5.2.3 prior to release for public consultation.

ASI Guidance

10. The ASI Secretariat will consider revisions to ASI Guidance and will engage with the ASI Standards Committee to:
 - a. Coordinate the identification of Stakeholders to be directly involved (such as the relevant Working Groups, or experts).
 - b. Collate information relevant to the ASI Guidance.

- c. Identify issues and opportunities associated with the ASI Guidance.
- d. Determine the role of the Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group and the need for any other Working Group/s to assist with drafting or revision of the ASI Guidance. If a Working Group is required, it must be established with terms of reference in accordance with the agreed template for establishing Working Groups, should include participants from industry and non-industry relevant to the scope, and be approved by the Standards Committee.
- e. External subject matter expertise may be called upon to contribute to the revision process, after a consideration of financial resources required and approval from the ASI CEO.

5.2.2 Terms of Reference

ASI Standards

11. The ASI Secretariat will be responsible for the development of a Terms of Reference for public consultation to meet the requirements of both a 'Terms of Reference' and a 'Public Summary' under the ISEAL Alliance Standards-Setting Code. It must therefore include the following elements:
 - o the proposed scope of the standard and the intended geographic application;
 - o a justification of the need for the standard, including: an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the standard; an explanation of whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need; and documentation of other standards operating or in development that meet all or part of the expressed need;
 - o clear social, environmental and economic Outcomes that the standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the organisation's intended change (see ISEAL Impacts Code);
 - o an assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its Outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks (see ISEAL Impacts Code 7.6 and 7.4);
 - o learnings from reviews of the performance and effectiveness of the ASI Certification program, members' conformance to or performance against the ASI Standard/s, the analysis of feedback received from members, auditors and other stakeholders and any urgent revisions undertaken since the last revision of the ASI Standard/s; and
 - o steps in the standard-setting or revision process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing; and
 - o decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.
12. The Terms of Reference should also include the identification of any language translation needs during the consultation phases and define the methods by which comments can be received.
13. The Terms of Reference will itself be released for public comment (see section 5.3).

ASI Guidance

14. The ASI Secretariat will be responsible for the development of a Terms of Reference. This can be stand-alone for a Guidance-only development or revision; or incorporated into a broader overall Terms of Reference where Standards are also being developed or revised.
15. The Terms of Reference should include the following elements:
 - the issues/topics to be addressed for new or revised Guidance; and
 - learnings from reviews of the performance and effectiveness of the ASI Certification program, members' conformance to or performance against the ASI Standard/s, the analysis of feedback received from members, auditors and other stakeholders and any urgent revisions undertaken since the last revision of the ASI Standard/s; and
 - steps in the ASI Guidance revision process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing; and
 - decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.

5.2.3 Legal Review

ASI Standards & Guidance

16. New or revised ASI Standards and/or ASI Guidance shall be subject to a legal review by one or more of the Legal Committee, or internal or external legal counsel.
17. The purpose of the legal review shall be to:
 - Ensure the ASI Standards and/or ASI Guidance complies with applicable laws and minimises ASI's legal exposure
 - Assist ASI to act in accordance with the Anti-Trust Compliance Policy
 - Bring legal issues to the attention of the ASI Secretariat and/or Standards Committee and recommend courses of action as deemed appropriate.
18. Legal review shall occur at the following stages, as applicable:
 - Prior to each of the public consultation periods
 - Prior to ASI Board Approval.

5.3 Consultation Stage

ASI Standards

19. There will be at least one round of consultation (up to 60 days) on the draft Terms of Reference.
20. There will be at least two rounds of public consultation on drafts of the Standard (of up to 60 days).
21. The launch of a public consultation round shall be officially announced to the ASI mailing list, and added to the ASI website. Reminders and updates on the consultation period and processes will be regularly communicated via the ASI newsletter.
22. The announcement shall include:

- a brief and clear description of the scope and objectives of the ASI Standard
 - the justification of the need to introduce or revise the ASI Standard
 - the estimated timeline for completion of the ASI Standard
 - the opportunity and process to submit written comments on the ASI Standard
 - ASI contact details.
23. For all consultation rounds, the ASI Secretariat will facilitate dialogue on input received from the public with ASI Standards Committee using the template developed in step 6(g) above.
24. A compilation of feedback and comments received during the public comment period and a synopsis of how they are being addressed will be summarised and made publicly available on the ASI website, shared through the ASI newsletter and emailed directly to any commenters who choose not to receive the ASI newsletter.
25. The Standards Committee will be involved with redrafting of subsequent versions of the ASI Standard following the public consultation and comments arising from the legal reviews.
26. Where outstanding issues exist at the end of the third consultation round, a final consultation period of 30 or 60 days (which shall be preceded by a legal review) may be considered by the Standards Committee.

ASI Guidance

27. Outside of Formal Revision processes, revisions to Guidance will not normally undergo public consultation. However:
- Proposed changes that are substantive will draw from the input of relevant expert resources (ASI Working Groups, ASI auditors and/or selected experts).
 - For significant and/or controversial matters, the ASI Secretariat, in conjunction with the ASI Standards Committee, may include one or more rounds of public consultation, similar to those for a Formal Revision process.
 - The outcomes of the discussions of the above-mentioned resources and inputs, and any resulting wording amendments, will be submitted to the ASI Standards Committee for final decision-making on content.

5.4 Approval Stage

28. Upon completion of the final draft of the ASI Standard along with/or the relevant ASI Guidance, the Standards Committee will decide whether to approve the ASI Standard and/or the relevant ASI Guidance for adoption by the ASI Board in the form of a By-Law.
29. The Board will review the recommendation and, where due process has been followed by the Standards Committees and no material risks are identified, document its decision to adopt the new or revised ASI Standard and/or the relevant ASI Guidance by making them a By-Law.
30. Where the Board reviews the recommendation and determines that either due process has not been followed and/or identifies a material risk to ASI, the Board will refer the proposed/revised Standard and/or ASI Guidance back to the Standards Committee for further work.
31. Approval by the Standards Committee and adoption by the Board are subject to the decision making and Consensus processes outlined in the ASI Governance Handbook.

5.5 Publication Stage

ASI Standards & Guidance

32. Once the ASI Standard and/or ASI Guidance has been approved by the ASI Board, the ASI Secretariat will prepare the final document for publication.
33. Only editorial corrections can be made during this stage.
34. The approved ASI Standard and/or ASI Guidance will be published on the ASI website within 30 days of Board Approval (unless otherwise specified in the Terms of Reference) and the issuance and key details communicated to all Stakeholders, including Accredited Auditors and Certified Members, as detailed in the ASI Communications Procedure for Changes to ASI Documents. Translated versions of the Standard may in some cases take additional time beyond this period.
35. The approved ASI Standard and/or ASI Guidance document shall include:
 - Date of publication
 - Next review date (a maximum of five years for ASI Standards and according to a published schedule for ASI Guidance)
 - Official language and a note that in case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version.
 - Contact point where requests for clarification and general feedback can be sent.
 - Reference to the ASI Complaints Mechanism (where appropriate)
 - In the case of revisions, the transition period that will apply for when Members must comply with the revised ASI Standard.
36. The ASI Secretariat will update the internal document register on Trello with the details contained in point 35.
37. Once the ASI Standards and/or ASI Guidance are issued, the Standards Committee will monitor feedback from Members and other interested Stakeholders, which will be recorded and considered as part of future revisions.

6 RECORDS

Records of public drafts and final versions of ASI Standards and ASI Guidance, comments received and responded to during the public comment periods (as applicable), decisions to recommend and adopt the, and policies and procedures guiding the standard setting activity shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

7 DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Name	ASI Standards Setting Procedure
Document ID	ASI-PRO-1
Revision	Version 4
First Publication Date	11 October 2019
Approved By	ASI CEO

Next Review Date	3 years or as required	
Revision History	Version 1	Issue for use, June 2016
	Version 2	Updates against ISEAL Standards Code, August 2018
	Version 3	Updates against ISEAL Standards Code, October 2019
	Version 3.1	Minor editorial to step 22, 11 October 2019
	Version 3.2	Change of terminology to 'Terms of Reference' in 5.2.3 (now 5.2.2) and elsewhere, April 2020; and section 5.4 on Board decision-making (new clause 28 as contained in the ASI Governance Handbook, September 2019).
	Version 4	Updates to reflect the periodic revision of ASI Guidance on Implementation and how those are embedded within each applicable step.

Please refer to the ASI Website for the latest version of this procedure.